Seattle-King County, Washington Community Case Study

Security and Preparedness Practices: A Collaborative Approach to Water Sector Resiliency

Implementing Water Security and Preparedness Programs:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Water provides national leadership in developing and promoting tools that enhance the water sector's ability to prevent, detect, respond to, and recover from all hazards. EPA embarked on the Seattle-King County, Washington Community Case Study (Case Study) to increase awareness about the benefits of implementing an active and effective protective program. The broad audience for this Case Study includes drinking water and wastewater utilities of all sizes, elected officials, local and state emergency management agencies, and leaders of critical sector organizations across all sectors.

Project Goals:

- Documenting and demonstrating how water sector utility practices that implement one or more of the features of an active and effective protective program can achieve benefits, increase preparedness, and improve resiliency

- Developing a case study methodology that can easily be replicated by other communities across the country

Benefits:

Some specific benefits to local communities that follow a similar case study model include:

- Increasing awareness of available resources for planning and assistance

- Understanding practices used by other agencies

- Understanding partner agency roles and responsibilities

- Building stronger relationships in the community

- Developing an increased appreciation for the interdependencies of the water sector with other sectors and organizations in the community

Case Study Methodology:

To develop a successful case study, communities should consider implementing the following major steps:

1. Forming a local guidance team, including representatives from multiple utilities and agencies

2. Conducting individual utility meetings to collect best practices

3. Conducting a workshop with utilities and collaborative agency representatives to collect information and share ideas for next steps

4. Compiling a case study report

5. Arranging a meeting with local elected officials to garner support for furthering security and preparedness practices

Key Findings:

Utilities that adopt practices built around protective programs are able to achieve benefits that result in reduced risk to their drinking water and wastewater systems and the communities they serve. The Case Study documents 23 practices, currently underway in Seattle-King County, that support enhanced protection of critical infrastructure and key resources. Several elements are necessary to ensure the success of local communities in implementing security and preparedness programs.

Partnerships are essential: Enhancing water sector security and preparedness requires partnerships with other interdependent sectors for effective response and recovery.

Think long term: Committing to a security culture is part of a long-term strategy for continual security and preparedness improvements.

Secure leadership support: Initiating and sustaining programs requires committed support from elected officials and regional emergency operations staff.

Think broadly: Pursuing a collaborative community-wide effort leads to multiple benefits.

Conclusion:

EPA recommends that all utilities address security and preparedness in an informed and systematic way. Utilities need to fully understand local circumstances and conditions under which they operate, and develop practices that are tailored to those conditions. The features of an active and effective protective program are based on an integrated approach that combines public involvement and awareness; partnerships; and physical, chemical, operational, and design controls to increase overall program performance.

The utility practices described in the Case Study report are examples of fundamental elements that have been proven successful at the local level. They address utility security and preparedness practices in four functional categories including:

- Organizational: Practices relate to the agency's overall structure and administration

- Operational: Practices relate to activities, often daily routines, required to meet the agency's mission

- Infrastructure: Practices relate to the physical system

- Collaborative: Practices involve interaction with one or more outside agencies

Contact Us:

The Case Study report and summary of the key features is available at http://www.epa.gov/watersecurity or by contacting Laura Flynn at 202-564-4611 or at flynn.laura@epa.gov.